United Nations CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/5/Add.1

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
19 July 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-eighth session
23 October-17 November 2017
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the fifth periodic report of Singapore

Addendum

Replies of Singapore*

[Date received: 18 July 2017]

Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Constitutional and legislative framework

Reply to paragraphs 1 and 2 of the list of issues

1. Article 12 (1) of the Singapore Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law and it specifically provides that "[a]ll persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law." This principle broadly encompasses and affirms the ideal of non-discrimination of women, in both the public and private sectors.

2. Any woman who is of the view that she is subjected to unequal treatment in legislation and/or unequal treatment in executive decisions on the basis of her gender can bring the matter before the courts. In addition, a woman aggrieved by a legal provision that allegedly discriminates against women may also apply to the courts to seek a judicial review of that particular legislation on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and fails to adhere to Article 12 (1) of the Constitution on equality. This will then be subject to adjudication by the courts.

3. There are also other existing mechanisms (e.g. within Government agencies, Parliament and the media) to address individual complaints of gender discrimination. There has been no feedback of insufficient complaint channels so far. Nevertheless, Singapore will continue to monitor and review if more such channels should be set up.

4. In addition to our Constitution, there is specific legislation that protects the rights of women in particular areas, like the Employment Act, the Women's Charter, the Children and Young Persons Act and the Penal Code. Since 2009 to date, Singapore has also enacted several laws which strengthen and give effect to Singapore's obligations under the CEDAW. They include the Protection from Harassment Act, the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act and the Family Justice Act. Women can report violations to the relevant authorities, which will look into the complaints and take action to enforce the laws as appropriate. An affected victim, or someone on her behalf, can also lodge a police report.

5. The following is a non-exhaustive list which sets out further information regarding the implementation under our legislative framework in the area of legal protection available to women:

(a) **Employment Act.** The Employment Act (EA) protects female employees during pregnancy and while on maternity leave. For example, the EA ensures that female employees are entitled to their maternity leave and prohibits their dismissal when they are on maternity leave. Female employees who feel that they have been unfairly dismissed may appeal to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM). If the employee has been dismissed without sufficient cause, MOM may order a reinstatement for the employee and/or order compensation to be paid to her. From 2012 to 2016, MOM received an average of about 70 cases per year from female employees who felt that they had been unfairly dismissed during their pregnancies or while they were on maternity leave;

(b) **Protection from Harassment Act.** The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) provides a legal framework for standards on socially-acceptable behaviour within and outside the workplace. The provisions cover a wide range of conduct, including cyber bullying, stalking and sexual harassment. Since it came into force in November 2014 to 31 May 2017, 50 per cent of the applications received by the State Courts from victims of sexual, workplace and online harassment were made by women;

(c) **Women's Charter.** Either party of a marriage solemnised under the Women's Charter may file a writ for divorce on the grounds that the marriage has irretrievably broken down. In 2016, 6,301 writs of divorce were filed, of which 3,767 were filed by women. In addition, under the Women's Charter, the court may order an (ex) husband to pay his (ex) wife a monthly allowance or lump sum as spousal and/or child maintenance, upon the application of the (ex) wife and proof that the (ex) husband has neglected to provide reasonable maintenance. In 2016, 1,376 maintenance applications were filed by women.[1]

(d) **Prevention of Human Trafficking Act.** The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) is Singapore's primary legislation against trafficking in persons (TIP). Since it came into force in March 2015 to 31 May 2017, there have been 8 cases brought under the PHTA for sex and labour trafficking.

6. The authorities will also look for grounds to prosecute cases of abuse under other legislation such as the Penal Code, the Children and Young Persons Act and via labour-related legislation such as the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act and Employment Agencies Act.

7. Judges and judicial officers in our Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts receive training from the Singapore Judicial College (SJC). This includes the development of knowledge and skills to equip them to deal sensitively and appropriately with cases involving women, relational and family issues. For example, in 2016, SJC organised courses which included CEDAW-related topics on family violence and the handling of child victims, such as "Family Violence — Sharing by the Police", "Management of Child Interviews in Court", "International Issues on Family Law" and "Focus on Child's Welfare". In 2017, the course on "Implementation of Human Rights Treaties in Dualist States" specifically discussed the provisions under three United Nations treaties: CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

8. Programmes relating to the CEDAW are offered to lawyers as well. For example, the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) supported a seminar by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and the US Embassy on "Gender Equity and the Rule of Law" in 2016. This seminar was accredited by SAL, to allow lawyers to obtain Continuing Professional Development points.[2] SAL also envisages holding courses on skills training to help family law practitioners interact with vulnerable clients, such as victims of spousal abuse.

9. All police officers are trained to handle victims of crime in general, as part of their basic police training. Officers are sensitised to the vulnerabilities of sexual crime victims and taught to handle victims of crimes, particularly women, with care. This includes attending courses that teach officers basic victim care principles — safety, emotion and information. A specialised group of prosecutors also undergo training to handle cases involving violence against women and girls. Police officers and prosecutors are also trained to adopt appropriate techniques when interviewing victims of sexual crimes. In addition, they attend conferences conducted by international experts in order to learn best practices from international experts and their counterparts. Prosecutors also regularly attend overseas training on prosecuting gender violence (including training organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), so as to ensure alignment with best practices around the world.

[1] An additional 2,609 applications were made by women to enforce against (ex) husbands who defaulted on the maintenance.

[2] Continuing Professional Development requirements are mandatory for all practising lawyers in Singapore.

Reservations

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

10. The practice of Muslim law varies among countries. Within Singapore's domestic context, Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, is in charge of monitoring developments in Muslim law. The Fatwa Committee[3] of MUIS meets regularly to discuss points of Muslim law, review current practices and recommend new measures to ensure that our religious practices remain progressive.

11. It is through the implementation of progressive Muslim law that Muslim women here are being safeguarded. This approach was what enabled Singapore to make partial withdrawal of our reservations to Articles 2 and 16 in 2011. The Singapore Government is committed to an ongoing review process and will continue to conduct comparative studies on the developments of Islamic law in other Muslim countries, in order to develop and enhance the administration of Muslim law in Singapore.

Marriage and family relations

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

12. The Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains progressive. Although the AMLA requires a woman to have permission from a wali (legal guardian) for her marriage, the marriage may still be solemnised by a Kadi (officials of religious standings appointed by the President of Singapore to solemnise Muslim marriages), if the Kadi considers that the grounds on which the wali refuses to consent to the marriage are unsatisfactory. The Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM) ensures that the right of the woman to be heard relating to the wali requirement is incorporated into its administrative procedures. The grounds on which women may seek divorce are wide-ranging and some are exclusive to women. For example, women may seek divorce by means of taklik (divorce effected upon fulfilment of specific conditions), fasakh (judicial dissolution) and khuluk (redemption).

13. Fatwas on the Central Provident Fund (CPF) and insurance nominations were issued in 2010 and 2012 respectively. The fatwas allow a husband to nominate his wife as the sole beneficiary, and she is entitled to receive the full amount upon his death. Previously, such nominations would have been considered as void, as she would have to return the money to the husband's estate to be distributed according to the Muslim inheritance law. In addition, a fatwa was issued in 2016 to exclude trusts created in favour of physically or mentally-incapacitated dependents from the Muslim inheritance law. This enables a special needs dependent, regardless of gender, to receive equal or more shares from the estate, as compared to their siblings, including male siblings.

14. Although the AMLA provides for polygamy, polygamous marriage applications constitute only 0.2 per cent[4] of Muslim marriages registered in 2016 in Singapore, down from 0.4 per cent in 2010. All applications for polygamous marriages are rigorously reviewed by ROMM. Only applicants deemed able to meet the stringent requirements are allowed to take a second wife. The first wife may also

[3] An independent body of Muslim scholars, appointed by the President of Singapore to deliberate on issues affecting the administration of Muslim Law.

[4] Thirteen polygamous marriages out of a total of 5,954 Muslim marriages registered under the ROMM in 2016, down from 18 out of 4,133 marriages in 2010.

voice her objections to the second marriage to ROMM. If the application is approved and the first wife is dissatisfied with ROMM's decision, she may further lodge an appeal with the Appeal Board.

15. On marriage of girls below the age of 18, the AMLA allows for the marriage of a girl below 18 years of age only in special circumstances and only with the Kadi's permission. In practice, applications for such marriages are the exception and approved applications constitute only 0.4 per cent of Muslim marriages registered in 2016 in Singapore, down from 0.8 per cent in 2010. The Government, in partnership with Malay Muslim organisations, continues to actively highlight the adverse implications of marrying at such a young age, through public education initiatives. From 2018 onwards, marriage preparation programmes will be mandatory for couples where at least one party is below 21 years of age. With continued public education, we are confident that further progress can be made on this issue.

Access to justice

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

16. The PHTA came into effect in March 2015. The PHTA has put in place a dedicated regime to protect and support trafficked victims, as well as to encourage the reporting of offences relating to TIP. There are also protection measures in place under various other legislations, including the Penal Code, the Women's Charter and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act. The Government is aware of the plight and anxieties of these victims. We do not prosecute such victims for acts which they are compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being trafficked victims unless there are compelling factors. The Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce for Trafficking in Persons (TIP) also funds shelters that offer protection for trafficked victims, including accommodation, medical care and counselling and translation services. For trafficked victims who wish to return home, Singapore will facilitate their return. The Taskforce also provides a range of additional support measures, customised to the victims' needs. For example, where possible, we facilitate the placement of victims who are willing and able to work, in suitable employment in Singapore. This allows them to remain gainfully employed and maintain an income.

17. Legal aid is available to persons of limited means regardless of gender, through avenues such as government-funded legal aid schemes, and initiatives of the Law Society of Singapore and various volunteer welfare organisations. The Ministry of Law regularly reviews the means test for government-funded legal aid to ensure that those who are unable to afford to hire a lawyer can still obtain legal advice or representation. Legally-aided persons under government-funded legal aid schemes are not required to pay court fees. The Legal Aid Bureau (LAB) works closely with partners such as the Community Justice Centre, Family Service Centres, Social Service Offices and voluntary welfare organisations so that they are aware of LAB's services and can refer their clients who require legal help to LAB. Conversely, where appropriate, LAB refers legal aid applicants to these partner agencies so that vulnerable persons requiring non-legal social assistance are able to obtain the necessary help.

18. To enhance women's awareness of their rights and enable them to avail themselves of legal remedies, information and policies that are relevant to women are published on various ministries' websites. For example, the Ministry of Social and Family Development's (MSF) website[5] contains information regarding CEDAW,

[5] Available from www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Women-Celebrating-Women/Pages/default.aspx.

the Women's Charter, as well as schemes, assistance and resources available for women.

19. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of Singapore's accession to CEDAW in 2015, the Office for Women's Development (OWD) produced a brochure which comprises information on the key legislation that protects women, as well as the government policies and initiatives that support women. The brochure was disseminated to women's groups and also posted on MSF's website.[6]

20. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Trades Union Congress, and Singapore National Employers Federation jointly issued a Tripartite Advisory on Managing Workplace Harassment in December 2015. It contains information relating to POHA, to enhance the awareness of employers and employees of the remedies under POHA for workplace harassment, including workplace sexual harassment. It is published on MOM's website.[7]

21. There are also public campaigns to help raise awareness on issues that affect women. For example, MSF launched the three-year "Break the Silence | Against Family Violence" campaign in November 2016, to renew and continue to raise awareness of family violence. Over the next three years, MSF will work closely with the community and corporate partners to further raise awareness of family violence. The campaign includes roving community roadshows and collaterals that provide information and resources to help victims of violence, and to equip bystanders with skills that are required to safely step in to help victims.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

22. Since the enactment of the PHTA in March 2015 until December 2016, the Singapore Police Force has investigated 70 alleged sex-trafficking cases and MOM has investigated 68 alleged labour-trafficking cases. As at May 2017, 8 cases have been prosecuted under the PHTA.

23. Our victim care framework comprises a number of legal and administrative measures.

24. On the legal measures, PHTA has provisions allowing the Court to order proceedings involving sexual exploitation offences to be held in-camera. In-camera proceedings are mandatory where the victim is a child. In addition, a gag order will be in force for all sexual exploitation cases. No person is permitted to publish the name, address or photograph, or perform any other act which is likely to lead to the identification of the trafficked victim in such proceedings. These measures protect victims from being identified, and encourage them to testify in confidence.

25. On administrative measures, a range of services, which may include temporary accommodation, food, counselling services, medical care and temporary employment, are provided to the trafficked victims. This is because each case of TIP is unique, and a professional assessment has to be made to determine the needs of each victim. The requisite support measures can then be tailored and provided accordingly. This approach is codified under section 19 of the PHTA which empowers the Director of Social Welfare (or any person authorised by him) with

[6] Available from www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Women-Celebrating-Women/international-and-Local-Events-on-Women/Documents/MSF per cent20Brochure_low per cent20res per cent20FA per cent20(2).pdf.

[7] Available from www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2015/1223-tripartite-advisory-on-managing-workplace-harassment.

discretion to provide trafficked victims with any such assistance as he considers practicable and necessary. Victims can be granted Special Passes in appropriate cases to stay in Singapore while their cases are being processed. Victims serving as prosecution witnesses may also tap on the Temporary Job Scheme while their cases are being investigated.

26. Following the completion of the deliverables under the National Plan of Action (NPA) 2012-2015, the Inter-Agency Taskforce for TIP developed a new National Approach against TIP, which was launched in March 2016. The National Approach builds on the foundational work laid by the NPA and outlines the long-term direction to guide stakeholders in addressing TIP issues. The key strategies and the desired end outcomes of the National Approach are:

- **Prevention**: A public that is aware of TIP crimes and actively takes steps to prevent, combat and suppress TIP; government officials and stakeholders who are well-trained, competent and professional in identifying and dealing with TIP cases.
- **Prosecution**: An effective end-to-end criminal justice response to TIP crimes, involving comprehensive investigations and prosecution of all offenders who may be involved in trafficking or the exploitation of victims.
- **Protection**: An appropriate victim care and support framework that looks after the needs of all victims of trafficking.
- **Partnership**: A strong ecosystem comprising both domestic and international stakeholders to put forth a whole-of-Singapore response against TIP.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

27. The Government has two main entities overseeing women-related matters. First, the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on CEDAW takes a coordinated "whole-of-government" approach to the domestic implementation of CEDAW. Members[8] of the IMC on CEDAW are responsible for monitoring, implementing and coordinating laws, policies and initiatives within their own agencies' purview to ensure compliance with CEDAW and to better address the needs of women. Any instances of discrimination against women can be addressed by the relevant laws and regulations under the purview of the relevant agency. If there is any practice of discrimination, the Government would take necessary measures to address the situation. Second, the Office for Women's Development (OWD) at MSF, which is the national focal point for women matters, supports the IMC on CEDAW. Like the rest of the divisions in MSF, OWD is headed by a Senior Director and a Director. It monitors policies and conducts gender analysis to ensure appropriate and timely implementation of gender-sensitive measures and policies. To ensure the effective implementation of gender equality policies, the political authority, human and financial resources, and capacity are drawn from the full complement of Government agencies represented on the IMC on CEDAW.

28. All citizens enjoy access to fundamental resources such as education, healthcare and social protection. In addition, our stakeholder approach enables

[8] The IMC on CEDAW comprises officials from the Ministries of Social and Family Development; Communications and Information; Culture, Community and Youth; Defence; Education; Foreign Affairs; Health; Home Affairs; Law; Manpower; and National Development, as well as the Attorney-General's Chambers, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and Public Service Division.

ministries to take a gender-sensitive perspective on issues that have differing impact on women and men. For example, recognising that women have different health needs compared to men, the Women's Health Committee was set up to promote the health and well-being of women. It was revamped in 2016 and will focus on current key health issues among women (i.e. increasing cancer screening uptake, promoting bone health and fighting diabetes).

29. Singapore notes that the Millennium Development Goals have been superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Singapore is similarly committed to achieving the goals of the SDGs. We believe that the SDGs should focus on bringing concrete and substantive improvements, and that countries should be free to pursue the goals in whatever manner they choose. On our part, we use it as a reference point in the formulation of our policies. In addition, the People's Action Party's Women's Wing tabled a substantive motion in Parliament in April 2017, which examines the aspirations of Singapore women in four broad areas, namely leadership and social impact, employment and entrepreneurship, family and caregiving, and financial well-being. There was a robust debate in Parliament, where a total of 20 parliamentarians (both men and women) spoke on the Motion. Various ministries also shared on their respective efforts to support Singapore women. The debate was widely covered on both print and social media. The debate demonstrates our commitment to SDG Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. In addition, Singapore notes that the rule of law is integral to achieving gender equality and the elimination of discrimination, as highlighted by SDG Goal 16, target 16.3. Singapore is committed to a strong rule of law and this has been acknowledged internationally. The World Justice Project ranked Singapore ninth out of 113 countries in its Rule of Law Index (2016).[9] The World Bank also placed Singapore in the 97th percentile rank for the Rule of Law dimension of its Worldwide Governance Indicators (2015).[10]

Temporary special measures

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

30. A Diversity Action Committee (DAC) was set up in August 2014 to build up women's representation on boards of companies listed on the Singapore Exchange (SGX). It comprises illustrious leaders and professionals from the business, people and public sectors.

31. Being a business-led committee with a good understanding of the Singapore's business environment, the DAC was of the view that to achieve a meaningful and sustained increase in women representation on boards, companies need to appreciate the practical benefits of board diversity, in terms of strengthened decision-making and resilience.

32. The DAC adopted a two-pronged approach. Firstly, in August 2016, the DAC recommended to the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) to enhance its Code of Corporate Governance and require SGX-listed companies to disclose their board diversity policy (including gender), measurable objectives, and their progress towards achieving these objectives. The DAC believes that increased transparency and accountability will spur companies to adopt a disciplined approach to diversify their boards. MAS has since formed a Corporate Governance Council to review the Code. The Council will be taking these recommendations on board as part of its review.

[9] Available from www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index.

[10] Available from www.info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/.

33. Secondly, the DAC adopted a multi-stakeholder approach to raise awareness and influence change. This included the following:

(a) Releasing a report "Women on Boards: Tackling the Issue" in October 2016 which discussed both its findings on the obstacles to having more women directors as well as potential solutions to the problem. The report also contained interviews from leading companies which shared insights on how to increase and harness more gender diversity;

(b) Identifying potential women directors to build up the pipeline in preparation for an increase in demand for women board directors;

(c) Engaging other interest groups and the civil society to increase conversations on the topic of having more women on boards.

34. DAC has set a triple-tier target of 20 per cent by 2020, 25 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030 for women's representation on boards of SGX-listed companies, and called for larger companies to take the lead and create a catalyst for change. This target was announced by the Minister for Social and Family Development in Parliament in April 2017, during a parliamentary debate on a substantive motion in Parliament on the "Aspirations of Singapore Women".

Stereotypes

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

35. Singapore raises awareness of men's responsibilities and roles as fathers, husbands and individual members of the family through campaigns and public education programmes.

36. The Government promotes shared parenting through "FamilyMatters@School" programmes in close to 300 schools. In particular, "FamilyMatters@School for Fathers" encourages fathers to bond with their children, be more involved in their children's lives and be role models to them. The Government also works with community partners to shape perception of gender roles and expectations within marriage. For example, the Government works closely with the Centre for Fathering (CFF) on Dads for Life (DFL), a national movement that aims to inspire and involve fathers actively in their children's lives. CFF encourages fathers to be active in parenting and nurturing their children — a role which has traditionally been associated with mothers. To support fathers, CFF has been organising workshops like 'Beginning Parenting Programme' for over 10 years, to equip new parents, particularly new fathers, with confidence and skills to manage their new roles and responsibilities. These efforts have greatly encouraged fathers to break out of traditional roles and stereotypes to embrace greater parenting responsibilities.

37. The Government also conducts capability-building sessions to discuss contemporary marriage and family trends and role expectations. This includes marriage educator network sessions; as well as the "Engaging Hearts and Minds" seminars which brings together educators, social service practitioners, academics and individuals with a shared mission to explore ways to better support Malay/Muslim families in nurturing resilient children.

38. The Families for Life Council aims to build strong and resilient families. It comprises members from the people and private sectors. The Council offers a suite of complimentary Family Life Education programmes at workplaces and community touch points which cover key areas of family life, such as marriage and parenting, to encourage both parents to take on shared parenting responsibilities.

39. From time to time, the media also profiles the important role played by men in parenting and caregiving. One example is the Malay drama series "Walimah 2", which was nominated for a prestigious award show on a Malay television channel. The series touched on gender roles in the family and encouraged husbands and fathers to partake in active fathering, and couples to discuss roles and expectations to achieve best outcomes for their family.

40. To further encourage greater shared parental responsibility, the Government has also progressively enhanced leave provisions for fathers, over the years. For example, with effect from January 2017, Government-Paid Paternity Leave was increased from 1 to 2 weeks. From July 2017, Shared Parental Leave will be enhanced, so that working fathers will be able to share up to 4 weeks of their wife's maternity leave (increased from 1 week previously), subject to the wife's agreement. This is in addition to existing leave provisions which are given equally to fathers and mothers, i.e. up to 6 days of paid Childcare Leave per year per parent (with children aged below 13 years), and 6 days of Unpaid Infant Care Leave per year per parent (with children aged below 2 years).

41. The Growing Years programme in schools teaches students different gender issues and the importance of appreciating one's strengths and talents. Respect and empathy for others regardless of the beliefs and values or other differences are emphasised. All schools have a trained school counsellor who provides individual counselling, group guidance and works with the school, family and community. Schools also adopt a zero tolerance stance towards all forms of bullying. The Government has also publicly communicated that it protects all Singaporeans from the threat of violence, regardless of sexual orientation.

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues

42. The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore discourages sex stereotyping by prohibiting the portrayal of any person as a commodity or an object. It also stipulates that all persons (regardless of gender) should be portrayed in a manner that respects their dignity, and ensures that advertisements are legal, decent and truthful.

43. Non-medical practitioners (e.g. beauticians in beauty salons and spas) are prohibited from advertising medical services. They will be subject to prosecution under the Medicines (Advertisement and Sales) Act if they advertise that they have skills or provide services relating to the treatment any ailment, disease, injury, infirmity or condition affected the human body so as to induce persons to use their services.

44. The Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA) Programme Codes for TV discourage discrimination against any section of the community on account of gender, age, disability or occupational status.

Violence against women

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

45. We monitor key violence statistics such as the number of applications for a Personal Protection Order (PPO)/Expedited Order (EO)/Domestic Exclusion Order

(DEO);[11] the number of outrage of modesty victims; and the number of rape victims. These are broken down by gender. See the annex.

46. The Government does not tolerate any form of violence against women both within and outside a family context. The Penal Code criminalises all acts that cause death and physical harm, assault, sexual offences and wrongful confinement; and those using words or gestures intended to insult the modesty of a woman. These offences usually carry heavy penalties to deter offenders and signal society's strong condemnation of such acts.

47. In a recent judgment released in May 2017, the Court of Appeal of Singapore held that the appropriate sentence for a convicted rapist should start from at least 10 years imprisonment with 6 strokes of the cane (despite the fact that there is no statutory minimum sentence mandated by law for an offence of rape). This applies even to an offender who chooses to plead guilty. Further, depending on the number and intensity of the aggravating factors, the sentence would correspondingly increase and intensify. In appropriate cases, a convicted rapist may be sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and 18 strokes of the cane. The sentencing benchmarks for convicted rapists have been significantly calibrated upwards. This reinforces the notion that perpetrators of violence against women will be severely dealt with by the Courts in Singapore.

48. If the violence is experienced within the family, additional protection is accorded under the Women's Charter. The Women's Charter was amended in 2016 to enable both married and previously married persons below 21 years to seek protection against family violence for themselves and their children. Unmarried victims of family violence below 21 years can seek the help of a relative or appointed social service professionals to apply for a protection order on their behalf. This includes children involved in the context of a cohabitating relationship. Children are also protected under the Children and Young Persons Act.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

49. Violence against women is unequivocally wrong. Married persons have conjugal rights over each other, but such rights should be exercised within reasonable behaviour. The Government is thus reviewing the issue of marital immunity for rape.

50. The Women's Charter allows for a divorce within 3 years from the date of marriage if the plaintiff can prove either he/she has suffered "exceptional hardship" or "exceptional depravity" on the part of the defendant. Whether or not a case meets either of these criteria will need to be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific circumstances of each case.

51. The three-year requirement for divorce does not in any way prevent women from leaving situations of domestic violence. The aggrieved party can at any time leave the other party. Thus, in instances of family violence, parties can live separately for safety purposes and thereafter apply for divorce when the 3 year requirement of the law is met.

52. In addition, for parties who experience family violence, they can apply for a Personal Protection Order (PPO) and/or Domestic Exclusion Order (DEO). Breaches of such orders amount to a seizable criminal offence.

[11] A PPO is an order restraining the respondent from committing family violence against the applicant. A PPO may be granted on an expedited basis (EO) if the Court is satisfied that there is imminent danger of family violence being committed against the applicant, even before the respondent has been served with the application. A DEO is an order restraining the respondent from entering the applicant's home.

53. Moreover, after a PPO has been issued, and should parties decide to continue living under the same roof, they are usually also ordered to attend mandatory counselling that covers safety-related and practical considerations within the family.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

54. Prostitution per se is not a crime in Singapore. Nonetheless, the authorities takes a serious stance against its associated activities such as soliciting, importation of women for the purpose of prostitution and living off the proceeds of prostitution, and will not hesitate to take action, including initiating criminal prosecution where appropriate. The Police also ensures that organised groups do not gain a foothold through such activities. The Police will investigate cases where persons are forced into prostitution or exploited.

55. We do not collate statistical data on prostitutes because prostitution in itself is not a crime in Singapore. Instead, we collate data on the number of women arrested when law enforcement officials conduct operations for activities associated with vice such as soliciting in public. It is an offence to solicit in a public place under Section 19 of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act. Foreign women who are found to solicit in public can also be arrested for immigration related offences such as overstaying or for violating the conditions of their Social Visit Passes. The total number of women arrested for activities associated with vice has dropped from 4,886 in 2014 to 2,947 in 2016.

56. Depending on their age, women and girls who are trafficked victims and wish to leave prostitution may be placed in one of the crisis shelters or a children and young persons' home, where they receive the same services as other residents. They would also receive case management support or victim care services (e.g. counselling, employment services) until their return to their home countries in the case of foreigners, or reintegration, in the case of locals.

Participation in political and public life

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

57. Singapore's approach to gender equality is founded on the principle of meritocracy, where equal opportunities are available to men and women.

58. Women in Singapore are able to enter politics based on their own merits. The various political parties in Singapore consciously and continually seek suitable women candidates. Women occupied 24 out of 101 seats (23.8 per cent) in the Singapore Parliament as at May 2017. These percentages exceed the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world average of 23.3 per cent.[12] As Singaporean women become more educated, the Government is confident that more will consider entering politics in time to come.

59. In January 2013, Madam Halimah Yacob was appointed the Speaker of Parliament, the first woman appointed to such a position. As at May 2017, there are six women political office-holders. Mrs Josephine Teo was promoted to a minister in May 2017 and there are now two women ministers. Ms Low Yen Ling was also promoted to Senior Parliamentary Secretary in May 2017. Out of the five mayors chairing the Community Development Councils (CDCs) that oversee the various

[12] Both houses combined as at 1 May 2017.

districts in Singapore, two are women. They are Ms Denise Phua and Ms Low Yen Ling. Ms Low was also appointed as coordinator of the CDCs in May 2017.

60. Women make up 28 per cent of judges in the Supreme Court as of 2016, as well as 46.1 per cent, 64.0 per cent and 50.0 per cent of judicial officers in the State Courts, Family Justice Courts and Supreme Court respectively, as at end December 2016.

61. In the civil service, women make up 27.2 per cent of the Permanent Secretaries and 28.9 per cent of the Deputy Secretaries, as at end December 2016.[13]

62. Gender also does not affect the assignment of jobs in the Foreign Service. As at end March 2017, there are 231 women (44 per cent) out of a total of 523 Foreign Service Officers.

Nationality

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

63. Children born to Singaporean mothers before 15 May 2004 can apply for citizenship by registration under Article 124(1) of the Singapore Constitution.

64. Stateless persons can apply for and acquire Singapore Citizenship if they meet the necessary requirements. Each application for Singapore Citizenship, including those submitted by stateless individuals, is evaluated on a range of criteria, including economic contributions, educational qualifications, family profile and length of stay in Singapore. We assess each application carefully and compassionately, especially for those who have integrated well and can contribute to Singapore. We also look very carefully at the different circumstances of each case, and recognise that not everyone who is stateless can be treated in the same way.

Education

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

65. All students read Science at the Primary and Lower Secondary levels. In Primary school, students are introduced to the human reproductive system in order, amongst other things, for them to gain an understanding of the process of fertilisation in the sexual reproduction of humans. They will continue to learn more about this topic at the Lower Secondary level.

66. In addition, the sexuality education curriculum in schools is taught through a programme known as The Growing Years. This programme helps students understand the physiological, social and emotional changes they experience as they mature; develop healthy and rewarding relationships; and make wise, informed and responsible decisions on sexuality matters. A key focus is on helping students understand their rights to physical and psychological safety.

67. Complementing The Growing Years is eTeens,[14] a programme for students in their third year at the Secondary level and their first year in a Junior College, on the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and the human immunodeficiency virus (STIs/HIV). This programme provides students with accurate information

[13] A Permanent Secretary is the highest position held by a civil servant in a Government ministry, followed by the Deputy Secretary position.

[14] *eTeens* stands for 'Empowered Teens' (empowered to make wise, informed and sensible decisions).

about STIs/HIV, and the effective modes of protection against infection from a health perspective. Skills on decision-making, assertiveness and negotiation to say no to sexual advances and negative peer pressure are reinforced. Students learn that the consequences and impact of contracting STIs/HIV extend beyond themselves and involve their family and the community. The programme upholds family values and promotes abstinence before marriage as the best course of action for teenagers. The Growing Years and the classroom-based component of the eTeens programme are taught by core teams of teachers trained by the Ministry of Education.

68. The talent management policies in our schools are merit-based and do not discriminate by gender, race, age or religion. Staff, regardless of whether they are men or women, are given equal opportunities and are appointed to leadership roles based on their potential, work performance and competencies.

69. The sex-disaggregated data on Vice Principals and Principals at all levels of the education system in 2015 is as follows.

	Primary		*Secondary*		*Junior College/Centralised Institute*		*Total*	
	Female	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*
Vice Principals	68%	32%	49%	51%	41%	59%	57%	43%
Principals	76%	22%	54%	46%	50%	50%	65%	35%
Total							**60%**	**40%**

Employment

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

70. Through the concerted efforts of the tripartite partners (i.e. MOM, National Trades Union Congress and Singapore National Employers Federation), Singapore has made steady progress in the area of flexible work arrangements in the past 10 years. In 2016, 67 per cent of employees worked in firms that offer formal flexible work arrangements (such as part-time and staggered working hours), up from 56 per cent in 2011. Similarly, in 2016, 82 per cent of employees worked in firms that offer ad-hoc flexible work arrangements (such as unplanned time-off), up from 72 per cent in 2011. At the same time, the employment rate of women (aged 25-64) increased steadily from 69 per cent in 2012 to 72 per cent in 2016, bringing Singapore from being 16th (compared to 35 OECD countries), to 13th.

71. From 2013 to March 2017, the number of child care places increased by more than 40,000 places, surpassing the target of 20,000. There are now enough places for one in two children island-wide. The Government will continue increasing child care capacity, especially in estates with many young families.

72. Singapore has adopted a multi-pronged approach to help women stay in the workforce, especially mothers; and for non-working women to get back into the workforce.

(a) **Encourage companies to offer flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to their employees.** FWAs are important in helping females, especially mothers, better manage their work and family responsibilities. The Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy (TriCom), which comprises members from government agencies,

tripartite partners[15] and employers, promotes work-life practices, in particular FWAs, as a strategy to optimise business performance and facilitate employees to manage their own work-life fit. In 2014, the TriCom launched a Tripartite Advisory on Flexible Work Arrangements to guide employers, employees and supervisors on effective implementation of FWAs at their workplaces. To recognise companies who have adopted FWAs and encourage more to do so, the tripartite partners will be launching the Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements, which outlines verifiable, actionable best practices for the successful adoption of flexible work arrangements, by the end of 2017. In addition, the Government introduced the WorkPro Work-Life Grant in April 2013 to provide financial support to incentivise employers to implement FWAs. Employers can receive up to S$160,000 over four years to defray the costs of developing, piloting and implementing work-life strategies, particularly FWAs;

(b) **Encouraging and helping mothers to return to the workforce.** MOM will support the National Trades Union Congress' Returnship Programme to facilitate the re-entry of individuals who have been out of the workforce for a period of time, including returning mothers. To ease these returners back into employment, MOM will be encouraging companies to offer more part-time and job sharing opportunities. Such options are important, because they give returners an option to reduce or adjust their workload so that they can better manage their multiple responsibilities (e.g. caregiving);

(c) **Helping women to stay employable and be future-ready.** Women can benefit from the Adapt and Grow package of schemes, which provide employment and placement support for workers re-entering the workforce, or transiting to new jobs. Women can also tap on subsidies for self-sponsored training (e.g. SkillsFuture Credit, SkillsFuture Mid-career Enhanced Subsidy for Singaporeans aged 40 or older). This could, for instance, facilitate the upskilling of women outside the workforce in preparation for re-entrance.

73. All employers are expected to adopt the principles of fair and merit-based employment, in line with the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices. The Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), as the advocate and champion for fair employment practices, plays an active role in looking into such complaints and refers cases to MOM for investigation where warranted. Workers who face workplace discrimination may approach TAFEP for advice and assistance.

74. Twenty-four companies have been taken to task between 2014 and 2016 for discrimination against women. These cases involved discriminatory job advertisements which stated a preference for men, without stating a valid reason based on the job requirements. These employers had their work pass privileges curtailed or were warned by MOM, and made to take down the discriminatory job advertisements.

75. TAFEP will step up its public education campaign to make people more conscious and sensitive about embracing diversity in the workforce, in order to eliminate discrimination. TAFEP will also ramp up training for HR practitioners to ensure recruitment and selection are based on the principles of fair and merit-based hiring, and publicise best practices in this area.

[15] This comprises the Ministry of Manpower (representing the Government), the National Trades Union Congress (representing the employees) and the Singapore National Employer Federation (representing the Employers).

76. The median wage[16] of women in Singapore has increased by more than 5 per cent per annum in the last 10 years — broadly similar to that for men. Currently, the median wage of females in Singapore is lower than that of males.[17] More women than men tend to leave the workforce for caregiving purposes, resulting in fewer years of employment and working experience on average. We have adopted a multi-pronged approach to help women stay in the workforce, especially mothers; and for non-working women to get back into the workforce (see above).

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

77. Singapore is committed to the principle of equal pay for equal work. Singapore ratified ILO Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration in May 2002 to signify its commitment to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

78. Following the ratification, the tripartite partners (i.e. the National Trades Union Congress, the Singapore Business Federation, the Singapore National Employers Federation and MOM) issued a Tripartite Declaration on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Performing Work of Equal Value on 6 Nov 2002. The tripartite partners recommended that unionised companies adopt the equal pay principle by incorporating a clause on equal remuneration into their collective agreements.

79. Regarding vertical occupation segregation, women tend to sacrifice career for the family. Singapore's approach has been to provide comprehensive skills, employment and workplace support to all individuals who are willing and able to work, so as to maximise their employment outcomes. This includes strategies to help women remain in the workforce even if they have other commitments, or return to work after any period of economic inactivity. Please see the reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

80. Regarding horizontal occupation segregation, more women are now found in traditionally male-dominated sectors, compared to the past. For example, the proportion of women doctors increased from 34 per cent in 2009 to 40 per cent in 2014. Women made up 29.0 per cent of research scientists and engineers (RSEs) in 2014, up from 26.5 per cent in 2009. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of women RSEs grew by 4.8 per cent, compared to the growth of men RSEs at 2.0 per cent. As at 2015, 8 women had been appointed senior counsel (Singapore's equivalent of Queen's Counsel). In 2016, the first female judge, Justice Judith Prakash, was appointed as a permanent judge of the Singapore Court of Appeal.

Women migrant domestic workers and foreign women

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

81. There is comprehensive protection for foreign domestic workers (FDWs) under Singapore's laws. All FDWs are protected under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) which imposes Work Pass (WP) conditions on employers to look after the well-being of their FDWs, such as personal safety, acceptable accommodation, adequate food and rest, prompt salary payment and provision of medical treatment. The EFMA was enhanced in November 2012 to impose harsher penalties on employers who are found in breach of work pass conditions. They can

[16] Based on gross monthly income from work for full-time employed residents (excluding full-time national servicemen).

[17] In June 2016, the median gross monthly income of women in full-time employment was around 90 per cent that of men.

now be punished with a fine of up to S$10,000 and/or a jail term of up to one year (previous maximum penalty was a fine of S$5,000 and/or a jail term of up to 6 months).

82. In August 2012, MOM imposed more stringent requirements to ensure the safety of FDWs working in Singapore's highly-urbanised environment. For example, employers are prohibited from asking their FDWs to clean window exteriors above ground level, unless the FDW is supervised, and window grilles are installed and locked during the cleaning process. Besides facing enhanced penalties, errant employers may also be permanently barred from hiring a FDW.

83. From January 2013, employers are required to provide their FDWs with a weekly rest day or compensation in-lieu. This requirement followed extensive consultations with both employers and FDWs, who prefer flexibility in allowing them to work out a mutually agreeable arrangement. If there is mutual written agreement between the employer and FDW for the FDW to work on her rest day, the FDW must be compensated with either a replacement rest day or monetary compensation pegged at the worker's daily wage.

84. Employers who default on salary payments face a maximum fine of S$10,000 and/or jail sentence of up to 1 year. From 2007 to 31 March 2017, 70 employers were convicted, fined and barred from hiring FDWs for various lengths of time depending on the severity of the offences.

85. All FDWs are also protected under the Penal Code. The Penal Code was amended in 1998 to increase the penalties imposed on employers or household members who abuse FDWs.

86. Employers convicted of abuse against FDWs are permanently barred from employing another FDW. For abuse cases involving FDWs, the Police investigate all cases where criminal offences have been reported. In 2014 and 2015, there were about 30 substantiated cases per year involving FDWs as victims, and employer or members of employer's household as offenders. This is despite an increase in the FDW population by 4 per cent between 2014 and 2015.

87. Employment Agencies (EAs) serve as the intermediary between employers and workers in FDW recruitment. Singapore regulates the EAs via the framework set out in the EA Act, EA Rules and administrative conditions such as EA Licence Conditions. FDWs and employers who have disagreements concerning their contracts can approach CaseTrust or the Association of EAs (Singapore) for mediation. The EAs regulatory framework was amended with effect from 1 April 2011 to raise the standard of recruitment practices and minimise malpractices in the industry.

88. FDWs can report grievances through channels such as a toll-free FDW helpline manned by MOM officers. During the Settling-In Programme, all FDWs are given the helpline number, pre-paid mailers addressed to MOM where FDWs could send their feedback in, and other important contact numbers (e.g. those of their embassies, non-government organisations and the police). MOM also conducts interviews with randomly-selected first-time FDWs during their initial months of employment. These interviews allow MOM to determine if the new FDWs have adjusted to the Singapore's work environment and to reiterate to FDWs the importance of safe working conditions, and their rights and responsibilities.

89. Complaints from FDWs of physical and sexual abuse by employers are investigated by the police. Where investigations are ongoing, every effort will be made to ensure that the affected FDW is provided accommodation, food and counselling as required. FDWs are allowed to seek employment during this period. MOM will facilitate a temporary change of employer for the duration of

investigations and criminal proceedings, which can be effected without the need for their employers' consent. The FDWs are given the option to convert their temporary employment to permanent when the case is concluded.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

90. As a responsible member of the international community, Singapore takes its international obligations seriously. We will only sign on to a treaty when we are sure that we can comply fully with all the obligations. Our focus is on the full and effective implementation of the treaty commitments we have undertaken. We will continue to review our laws and policies with a view to ratifying more treaties.

91. Regarding ILO Convention No. 111 (1958) concerning discrimination in employment and occupation, we believe that enacting anti-discrimination legislation would introduce labour market rigidities that might erode Singapore's economic competitiveness while not necessarily eliminating discrimination. Nevertheless, TAFEP partners employers, unions and the Government to create awareness and facilitate the adoption of fair, responsible and merit-based employment practices. This encompasses non-discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender, religion, family status or disability. Singapore will continue to review our approach to dealing with employment discrimination and the prospect of ratifying ILO Convention No. 111.

92. Regarding ILO convention No. 189 (2011) concerning decent work for domestic workers, Singapore is committed to protecting the rights and well-being of our foreign domestic workers (FDWs). Although we have not ratified this Convention, we support the principles behind it, and have been reviewing our legislation regularly to ensure the well-being of FDWs and to protect their employment rights. Singapore will continue to carefully review our relevant policies and legislation, with a view to raising the minimum employment standards of FDWs.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

93. There were over 18,000 Letter of Consent (LOC) applications submitted by foreign spouses of Singapore citizens and permanent residents between January and December 2016. Over 95 per cent of these LOC applications were approved and amongst this pool, close to 90 per cent were approved within 2 weeks.

Refugees and asylum-seeking women

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

94. We are sympathetic to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. But as a small, densely packed, crowded city-State with limited land, Singapore is not in a position to accept them. Singapore adheres to the principle of non-refoulement. Although we do not have facilities for refugees and asylum seekers, we provide humanitarian assistance by making arrangements for their safe departure to another country. We also coordinate with appropriate bodies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to send them to a third country within a certain time frame. Our law enforcement officers are provided with the relevant training to appropriately deal with female refugees.

Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20, paragraph 1

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

95. Singapore has ratified the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on 20 August 2010.

96. The Singapore Government has given further consideration to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Optional Protocol will not be ratified at this time. The Government notes that the Optional Protocol serves to strengthen the implementation of the Convention within the jurisdiction of each State Party by giving the Committee the competence to receive and consider communications submitted in accordance with Article 2 of the Protocol. In Singapore, there are existing mechanisms to address individual complaints of gender discrimination. These mechanisms are not limited to legal action in court, but include mechanisms within Government agencies, Parliament and media. There has been no feedback of insufficient complaint channels so far. These mechanisms are kept under continual review to ensure maximum efficacy and compliance with the Convention.

Annex

Statistics on violence against women

1. The number of applications for protection orders filed by women decreased by 6 per cent from 2009 to 2016.

Table 1
Number of applications for Personal Protection Orders/Expedited Orders/Domestic Exclusion Orders filed by women[a]

2009	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
2,268	2,332	2,223	2,334	2,383	2,194	2,180	2,130

[a] Includes applications for PPOs only; PPO and Expedited Orders (EO); PPO and Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEO); and PPOs, EOs and DEOs. Depending on the situation, one or multiple orders may need to be in effect at the same time. When applying for an EO or DEO, a PPO must be applied at the same time. In cases where there are further incidents of family violence before the first court mention (and with affirmation of complaint before a duty judge) or after the PPO was issued; the complainant may apply for a DEO. Where there are further incidents after an application for a PPO is filed, the complainant may apply for an EO where there is imminent danger, if an EO had not been issued on the earlier application.

2. The number of female rape victims decreased significantly by 25 per cent from 2009 to 2014, while the number of women whose modesty was outraged increased slightly by 1 per cent over the same period.

Table 2
Number of female rape victims

2009	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
203	165	150	138	123	166	167	151

Table 3
Number of female victims whose modesty was outraged

2009	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
1,253	1,437	1,400	1,417	1,349	1,365	1,279	1,267